

2012 Edition

You're Invited:



A PFLAG Field Guide to Engaging New Allies

straight
FOR
equality™



A publication from PFLAG National.



Welcome! A Few Words About This Guide

What is Straight for Equality?

Straight for Equality is a project of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (or PFLAG) National that was launched in 2007. It aims to do three basic things:



Invite straight people who may not have a family member who is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (GLBT) to learn more, speak up, and realize that their voices can create change.

Educate these new allies and potential allies about what life is like for GLBT people and their families, the challenges they sometimes face, and specific non-political ways that they can help.

Engage allies in a meaningful way and provide them with the knowledge and tools to start taking action to support equality in their everyday actions.

This sounds a lot like PFLAG. Why is Straight for Equality different?

There are two basic distinctions.

First, PFLAG provides resources specifically for GLBT people and their families, most often starting with how to get through the coming out process. Straight for Equality is for people who don't have that family connection, but often say that they have a friend, coworker, colleague, etc. who is GLBT who they'd like to support.

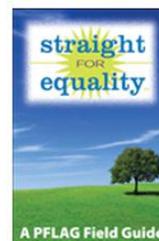
Second, PFLAG focuses a lot of energy on advocacy. We spend time working to support the passage of policies and laws that promote equality for GLBT people, like hate crimes legislation and marriage equality. Straight for Equality isn't about politics at all – in fact, we steer clear of those conversations, because for people who are just starting to learn, politics is frequently an uncomfortable topic. This is about everyday changes that you can make to your behavior (like saying "partner" instead of "husband or wife" or letting someone know that saying "that's so gay" isn't ok with you) that start changing how people see GLBT individuals.

Sure...we'd love to see our allies become involved in advocacy work. But Straight for Equality is about baby steps to get people moving in the right direction. Think about your first PFLAG meeting and how it felt. For many, being taken to the state capitol to lobby on that first day would have been too much, but in time you grew into it. The same rule applies here.

So how do I learn more – and provide resources – about Straight for Equality?

We've got some great resources for you. Here's where you should start:

- **Go to the Straight for Equality website:** Visit www.straightforequality.org. You'll find downloadable publications, lists of things that allies can do, information about training programs, suggested movies, books, and other resources.



- **Like Straight for Equality on Facebook and Follow Straight for Equality on Twitter:**
Facebook: “Like” us by visiting www.facebook.com/S4Equality
Twitter: Follow us at @S4Equality
- **Download or purchase Straight for Equality publications** such as the 2012 Edition of the *guide to being a straight ally*, *Straight for Equality in Healthcare*, and much more. Check out the Straight for Equality postcard or the Straight for Equality Brochure as low cost ways to help spread the word in your community.
- **Talk to us!** The Straight for Equality team is ready to help, and we love to chat. Contact us if you have specific questions, or if you’re interested in getting additional training on how you can use Straight for Equality. Email us at info@straightforequality.org.

How can I explain the Straight for Equality project to members of my chapter or a potential straight ally in five minutes or less?

We’re happy to help. If you’ve got five minutes, here’s a simple way to make your pitch work:

- **Two minutes:** Introduce yourself, and tell a super-mini-version of your story (the thing that PFLAGers do best!) For example, once you’ve given your name, let them know what your connection to the GLBT community is, ie., “I have a lesbian daughter and realized that I was going to have a coming out process when she told me that she is gay.”
- **One minute:** Tell people what PFLAG is (tell them the whole name, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), our mission (support, education, and advocacy), and a little about your chapter.
- **One minute:** Tell people about Straight for Equality.

For Example - Straight for Equality is a project that PFLAG started to help bring more people into the conversation about equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. We want to invite new allies like you to join the conversation, provide the education that you need, and help you find ways to be more engaged in moving equality forward. It isn’t about politics or confrontations. It’s about learning how to have discussions to identify the barriers we have to being more supportive and to start overcoming them so we can change things. This is about everyday actions, like not telling a gay joke, telling your kid not to say “that’s so gay”, or joining the GLBT group at work as a straight ally.

- **One minute:** Tell people a little about the program(s) that your chapter is working on and how you’re using the Straight for Equality Program in your community.

Now that I know what to do, is there anything I should avoid?

Remembering that Straight for Equality is about taking baby steps can sometimes be tough for us. With new allies, remember to be patient, and don’t immediately use language or terms that may confuse them or be intimidating. Some examples include:

- **Alphabet Soup:** Yep...you know what LGBTTIQQ2SA means, but a lot of people don’t. Don’t rely on acronyms – in many cases, we just use “gay” as an umbrella term and gradually start using GLBT as people learn more. Keep your language uncomplicated.
- **Focusing on homophobia:** While we all know that there are people who promote discrimination sometimes we’re quick to label anyone who isn’t fully supportive of the gay and lesbian community as “homophobic.” Now is the time to commit to breaking that habit.

Often, people often need more information before they can speak comfortably about GLBT issues. Sometimes, they have serious barriers (like the fear that other people may think they are gay too) that keep them from speaking up. Others may think that these issues don't matter to them because they're straight. None of these things necessarily make people homophobic. When we jump to label them, we make them defensive, shut down the discussion, and lose a valuable chance to talk about what they think.

When you're talking to people don't immediately assume that they are homophobic just because they are unsure about hot button issues like marriage equality. Talk to them. Maybe they are homophobic, but you'll never know if the conversation doesn't happen.

- **Pushing chapter membership:** Some allies won't be interested in coming to your support groups. Remember that this project and PFLAG have a bigger goal: to make the world a place in which all of us are considered equal, treated fairly, and affirmed. Even if a new ally doesn't opt for chapter membership, if they're helping achieve this goal through their everyday actions, then you've done a great job.

What's next?

We rely on you to let us know how the programs work, what you discovered, and if there are any things that you can share to make the programs more effective. After you do a program, please tell us how it worked!

If you've done programs with Straight for Equality already that you'd like to share, please let us know! Sharing our successes and best practices with other PFLAG members is a great way to move equality forward. Contact the Straight for Equality team at by email at info@straightforequality.org. With permission we may even share your story on the Focus on the Field Blog or on the Straight for Equality Facebook page.

Good luck and thank you for your commitment, hard work, and continued efforts to move equality forward!

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**Psst...We've got a program!
How to Spread the Word
about Your Event**

You'll put a lot of energy and time into these programs, so finding ways to ensure that you're attracting the right audience is critical. In this chapter, you'll find some simple, low-cost suggestions of effective ways to make sure that you'll get the audience you deserve.

Set a goal:

Think about these questions before you start advertising and inviting –

- **Who do you want to reach?** Think about who you hope will attend your event before you begin advertising. Your audience will help to determine when and where you focus your efforts. If you hope to reach college students advertising on campus will be really helpful but it may not do much to attract people from diverse faith backgrounds. If you are starting with a program that includes people you already know but haven't been involved with PFLAG in the past email, social media, and personal invites will probably be all you need. Is there a specific audience for the program that you're doing? Is it a certain age group (i.e., college students)? Is your audience from a particular background (i.e., people in a faith community)? Are these people you know already who you've never invited to a PFLAG event before, and you want this to be your first try? Are you looking to talk to total strangers?
- **What would you call successful?** Don't minimize your expectations, but set reasonable goals for your events. For example, for the house party, maybe your goal will be that each chapter member brings two friends. Or for the tabling event, maybe success would be talking to 50 people who sign up to receive additional information. Set a realistic goal so you can determine if the program you've done is successful and how you can modify it in the future.

Plan, plan, plan:

Once you've identified the project you'd like to try - and set a date and time - develop a timeline for promoting the event.

- **Websites:** Post information about your event 4-6 weeks prior to the event. This includes chapter websites as well as social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter.
- **E-mail blasts:** Four weeks prior to announce the event, two weeks prior as a 'formal' invitation, and the week of the event as a reminder
- **Mailed invitations:** 3-4 weeks prior to your event.
- **Paid advertising:** 1-2 weeks prior to the event.
- **Flyers:** Post them 1-2 weeks prior to the event.

Don't forget!:

You can download the Straight for Equality logo from the Straight for Equality website to use in your invitations, flyers, and ads. Go to straightforequality.org/logo

Who should we invite?:



One of the most important aspects of Straight for Equality is that it has the potential to exponentially expand the movement for GLBT equality.

However, reaching these new audiences takes a little strategy – make sure that you’re not preaching to the choir and only inviting your existing supporters to your programs. Consider including these people in your outreach:

- **Your circle of friends:** Whether they’re at work, in your faith community, from other organizations you belong to, or friends you’ve made through your own social networks, this is your chance to extend a warm invitation to them to be part of the conversation about equality in a very comfortable, non-confrontational, and fun way.
- **Your coalition partners:** Most PFLAGers are very familiar with the organizations that support our work. This is a great chance to invite them to participate in an event and thank them for their support.
- **Local colleges and universities:** Polling continues to show a huge shift in acceptance and support for GLBT people and equality issues among younger audiences. Invite them to be part of a Straight for Equality event. Advertise on campus and ensure that student groups are aware of what you’ve got planned.
- **People who have supported PFLAG in the past:** We often see people support PFLAG’s local work at a single event, and then have little contact with them again. Identify some of these supporters and give them a reason to be involved today.

Some guidelines about advertising:

Getting the word out doesn’t have to break your budget. Be creative (and eco-friendly) and use resources that are immediately available to you to amplify your voice. A few of these include:

- **The Web:** If your chapter doesn’t already have a website, contact your Field & Policy Coordinator today to learn how to create yours as part of the PFLAG National site. If you already have one, make sure that your invitation is posted there and is easy to find. Reach out to your friends and coalition partners and ask them to promote the event on their websites, too. Remember to use social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, as they are an effective (and free) way to let people know what you’re doing.
- **E-mail:** an e-mail is a super, green way to send an invitation. You can also use sites like Evite.com to create graphic invites that help you track who’ll be attending.
- **Flyers:** If you are going to create a flyer to be posted around your community, make sure that you are creating a flyer that will appeal to the broad audience that you hope to reach. While rainbows and pink triangles are common fare for PFLAG supporters, they might not play well with a new ally.

Also, think about where you’re posting flyers. Put them in places that get a lot of traffic from diverse audiences, like the library, shopping centers, churches, and campuses. Make sure that you follow all posting rules for these locations and get the necessary permissions.

- **Paid Advertising:** For most people a paid advertisement involves an ad or listing in the local newspaper. Make sure that you’re reaching out to many publications, such as your local

newspaper, school newspapers, church newsletters, and promotional publications for the local community center.

One last thing...

If people provide you with contact information and want to learn more about Straight for Equality, be sure to invite them to other programs that you're doing – and ask them to bring a friend. You'll find a sign-up sheet that you can use for events available to download from the Straight for Equality website.

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Tabling at a Non-GLBT Event in Your Community

Straight for Equality is a great way to introduce people to GLBT people, issues, and culture. Think about community events that will help your chapter reach new audiences, especially if they are sponsored by organizations that you would like to partner with in the future. You may also consider any events, festivals, or programs being held by your existing coalition partners.

What:

Having a table at a non-LGBT event to hand out materials is a great way to increase visibility in your community. By having a Straight for Equality table, you'll be able to reach new audiences. Make sure you have Straight for Equality Materials such as the 2012 Edition of the *guide to being a straight ally* or the *Straight for Equality in Healthcare* guide to pass out. You may also consider lower cost options such as the Straight for Equality postcard or materials that you can print at home like the 10 Tips to Being a Straight Ally. Don't forget to bring information on how people can contact you and your chapter, too!

You'll need people to manage the booth during the event. At one of your regular meetings, stand up and say a little about what Straight for Equality is and the event you're tabling at. Explain that you'll need people to be there and be ready to talk about the program, provide information, and answer questions. Pass around a sign-up sheet to identify your willing volunteers.

When you have volunteers, schedule a brief training to discuss talking points and what you hope to accomplish at the event. Be sure that everyone talks consistently about what Straight for Equality is!

Where and When:

Time and place are going to depend on the time and place of the event you're attending. Check with your contact at the event if you are unsure about when to get there and where to set up.

Also, remember to give the address and driving directions to volunteers and make sure everyone has a site contact just in case they need help!

Don't Forget!:

There may be a cost associated with setting up a table at a non-GLBT event. Take this into consideration as you plan.



Who:

Think outside the box to reach *new* people. Hone in on community celebrations – parades, street festivals, etc. These can be great places to get some visibility for your chapter and bring the message of Straight for Equality to an audience that otherwise wouldn't hear about the work you're doing.

Event Schedule:

1. Have a brief training for volunteers to discuss talking points for the day. This could be done before or after the last regular chapter meeting prior to the event.
2. Arrive at the event location and set up your table with your materials.
3. Hand out materials and talk about what Straight for Equality is. Don't forget to use personal stories! Be ready to provide people information about your chapter, too.
4. Have fun!
5. Pack up at the end of the event.

Follow-Up:

Follow up –To keep everyone informed about your chapter and Straight for Equality, use **a sign-up sheet** .You can download one of these ready-made sheets to print out on the Straight for Equality website. Be sure to provide the information that people request!

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Start a Straight for Equality Day of Service

As PFLAGers, you're no strangers to giving back to the community. Volunteering with a non-GLBT organization lets you and your members give back to the community in a completely different way. With some planning, you can bring the message of Straight for Equality to a whole new group of people that you might not have met otherwise while you're volunteering.

What:

Pick a volunteer organization – we've created a list of just a few options at the end of this chapter. Approach the organization that you choose and tell them that your PFLAG chapter wants to volunteer with them for a day as part of the Straight for Equality program. Use your time as volunteers to explain what PFLAG is, what Straight for Equality is and some of the other projects that your chapter has worked on.

Where and When:

Talk to the local organization you're volunteering with and agree on a date and time. Some activities will be all-day Saturday or Sunday, while others will be for a few hours after work during the week.

You also need to think about how you're getting to the site where the event will take place. Are you meeting there, or are you meeting at the spot where your chapter regularly meets and carpooling? Remember to give everyone addresses and directions!

Don't Forget!:

Visibility is key – give everyone who will be volunteering a Straight for Equality pin, sticker, or t-shirt to wear. They're great conversation starters and may get other people asking questions.

Who:



Be creative as you consider which organizations to volunteer with. Think of the strengths and interests of some of your chapter members. Spend a day with Habitat for Humanity or at a community garden. Volunteer at a local soup kitchen or adult tutoring program. Check out the end of the chapter for more suggestions.

Event Schedule:

1. **Begin advertising** – Six weeks before Volunteer Day
2. **Meet** very briefly before your volunteer activity begins to discuss talking points about Straight for Equality so chapter members are comfortable explaining the program.
3. **Volunteer!**

4. **Start talking!** As you work on your project, use the conversation starters included with this chapter to start talking about Straight for Equality. The goal is to be visible and to let people know who you are, what you're doing, and how they might be able to become more engaged. Be sure to include an 'ask' of people, even if it is just something like, "Check out the Straight for Equality website" or "'Like' Straight for Equality on Facebook."

5. Have fun!

Follow-Up:

Stay in touch with the organization that you chose to work with and be on the lookout for new volunteer opportunities. Keep those who volunteered updated on the progress of the project you worked on if possible to keep them engaged and eager to volunteer again in the future.

Conversation Starters

For a lot of people who you will be volunteering with, your conversation might be their first time talking about GLBT people and issues. Conversations do not have to be forced, political, confrontational or always serious. Take it slow, and remember to listen. Getting people talking is the first step to moving equality forward.

Here are a few ideas to get your conversations going:

- Talk about current events related to GLBT issues but try to avoid overtly political topics such as an upcoming ballot initiative or election.
- Talk to people about their family and use the opportunity to share your personal story and be sure to include what brought you to PFLAG in the first place.
- Ask people what brought them to the organization you are working with and share why you are there as well.

Avoid Alphabet Soup:

Remember to avoid acronyms at first. While you may know what "queer" or LGBTTIQQ2SA means, it could be confusing or intimidating to a new ally. Start with simple language, and be ready to gently educate!

Suggested Volunteer Sites:

- Food banks
- Animal shelters or rescue organizations
- Homeless shelters
- Walks/races for charity (breast cancer, leukemia, etc.)
- United Way projects and programs
- Local parks/recreation areas
- Habitat for Humanity
- Adult tutoring programs
- Community gardens
- Food co-op

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**Straight for Equality
Movie Night**

A movie night could be a great way to teach people about Straight for Equality. Films are great conversation starters and you can host a discussion with your guests for the evening about their perceptions.

What:

First things first: pick the movie. At the end of this section, you'll find a great list of movies to choose from. Try to find some options in which GLBT people (or the issues that they face) are only one part of the theme – it could lead to some unique discussions.

Afterwards, discuss the film using the discussion questions at the end of the chapter as a guide.

Note: Be sure to familiarize yourself with the content of the film you plan on screening and make sure that your group is comfortable and prepared for what they're going to see.

Where and When:

Next, pick a place and time to host your movie night. By taking a few things into consideration, you can attract straight allies more effectively.

- **Time** Be sure to consider times for this event that will be convenient for your audience. Set a realistic time frame for the film screening and discussion – be considerate of work and family schedules
- **Place** –Think about having the event in a local community center, library, school, or even someone's home. Some people may not feel comfortable going to a place like the GLBT community center or even the usual PFLAG meeting place.

Don't Forget!
You can make the event even more fun by providing (or encouraging people to bring) movie theater snacks like candy and popcorn.

Who:



This event is all about getting PFLAGers and straight (potential) allies in the community together. And the best way to do that is by advertising the event to broad and new audiences.

Think about who would want to attend a movie night as that will help you to determine where it is most appropriate to advertise. Movie theaters, college campuses, coffee shops, libraries, and churches are all great places to promote your movie night. Also, remember to remind chapter members how valuable their input will be and encourage them to participate. And don't forget to invite your friends, family and coalition partners!

Event Schedule:

1. **Begin advertising** – Six weeks before Movie Night.
2. **Introduce PFLAG, Straight for Equality, and your local chapter** – 5-10 minutes
Tell everyone a little bit about PFLAG, what Straight for Equality is, and where and when your chapter meets. Remember to invite everyone to stay after the film for discussion and let them know what kinds of questions to consider while watching the film.
3. **Watch the movie** – 90 minutes to two hours.
4. **Lead the discussion** – 30-45 minutes
A good way to do this is to have everyone get in a circle. Have one person be the discussion moderator. Have this person ask the questions on the list and get the discussion started. You don't have to ask every question on the list. Just focus on having a thoughtful (and respectful) conversation, using the questions as a way to get people talking.
5. **Conclude the meeting** – 5 -10 minutes
Stick to your schedule and conclude the meeting on time. Ask participants if they would be interested in attending another film screening in the future and be sure to thank them for coming.

Follow-Up:

To keep everyone, especially new people, coming back, use a **sign-up sheet** that allows people to check boxes for what information they want to receive. You can download the sample sign-up sheet from the Straight for Equality website.

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Straight for Equality: Movie Night Program

What should we watch?

Here is the list of recommended movies for your event. **Many of these works include mature content that is not suitable for children.** Make this clear in your advertising by including the film rating. Also, before using any of these films, pre-screen them yourself to make sure that you're comfortable and familiar with the material. IMDB.com and Wikipedia.org are two great resources for getting more background information on any of these movies.

These are just a few of the literally hundreds of other films that would be great for this program.

1. *Fried Green Tomatoes*

Two women grow up in the South and develop a very close bond. A discussion about the nature of this relationship and how it is portrayed could give way to some interesting conversations.

2. *Saved*

At a Christian school, a group of teenagers come of age and grapple with issues of faith, teen pregnancy, and sexuality. It's funny, and addresses these issues with a light touch.

3. *The Children's Hour*

Based on the classic play. Two teachers are rumored to be in a same-sex relationship in the 1930s, and it has serious repercussions on their lives.

4. *American Beauty*

Underneath a seemingly boring suburban life, everyday interactions of the characters reveal themes of coming of age, homophobia, and our assumptions about each other.

5. *If these Walls Could Talk II*

This movie explores how lesbians were viewed, how they lived, etc. through the ages. There are three vignettes, each taking place in a different time period (1950s, 1970s, and 2000s).

6. *Milk*

The story of Harvey Milk, the groundbreaking gay politician.

7. *The Color Purple*

This award-winning film tells the story of an African American woman, her experiences in her community and family, and her same-gender loving relationship.

8. *Rent*

The film version of the famous Broadway show deals with GLBT people and the issues they face, especially what it's like to live with HIV/AIDS.

9. *No Dumb Questions*

A very short documentary about three little girls who's Uncle Bill is becoming Aunt Barbara.

10. *For the Bible Tells Me So*

A documentary featuring families, faith leaders, and theologians discussing GLBT people, issues and the Bible. It's very sweet and affirming, and features Bishop Gene Robinson!

Discussion Questions:

To get the discussion going after movie night, consider asking some of these questions.

1. Which character – if any – did you identify most with? Why?
2. How did you think the GLBT characters were treated? Why?
3. Did this film make you think differently about some GLBT people and/or issues? Why or why not?
4. Did the GLBT character(s) and/or themes receive any support from an ally? How was that support expressed?
5. Does knowing that there are GLBT characters and/or themes in these works affect how you understand them?



**Straight for Equality
Book Club Meeting**

**Book clubs are a fun way to meet new people and expand your mind at the same time.
Books are great conversation starters and could be a great way to introduce
Straight for Equality to your community.**

What:

The first thing you'll need to do is pick the books. At the end of this chapter, you'll find a great list of suggested books to choose from. At your book club meetings, discuss the GLBT themes, characters, and/or author(s) of the novel. The books we're suggesting are just a starting point but we encourage you to think about books where the GLBT character(s) or author are one of many aspects of the book that you'll be able to discuss.

Note: Be sure to familiarize yourself with the content of the book you plan on reading and make sure that your group is comfortable and prepared for what they're going to read.

Where and When:

Pick a place and time to host your book club meetings and be sure to consider how long your meeting should be. You will want to have plenty of time for a lively discussion of the topics and themes addressed in the book but don't want to scare people off with an all day meeting. As for where to meet, try a coffee shop, local community center, library, or someone's home. Also, think about how often you are going to meet. People need time between meetings to read the book!

Don't forget!
Have snacks available at your book club meetings. People tend to be a little more social when there is food!

Who:



Who to invite is entirely up to you. Your book club could include friends, family, coworkers, members of your church or anyone else who may be interested. This event is about getting PFLAGers and potential straight allies talking to each other and talking frankly about GLBT people and issues. Think about putting up flyers at libraries, coffee shops, and community bulletin boards. Invite your friends, and if you already belong to a book club, invite those members, too. Contact everyone who attended other Straight for Equality events in the past and asked to receive information on programs. Also, remember to remind chapter members how valuable their input will be and encourage them to participate.

Event Schedule:

1. **Begin advertising** – At least one month before your first meeting since people will need the time to read the book that you've chosen. Remember to include the title of the book in your invitation, flyer, and advertisements!
2. **Begin your meeting by Introducing PFLAG, Straight for Equality, and your local chapter – 5-10 minutes**
At the beginning of your meeting, tell everyone a little bit about PFLAG, what Straight for Equality is, and where and when your chapter meets. Remember that you can always get ideas about what to say on the Straight for Equality website.
3. **Begin the discussion – 30-45 minutes**
A good way to do this is to have everyone get in a circle. Have one person be the discussion moderator. Have this person come up with a few questions to ask about the GLBT characters, themes, and/or author(s) to get the discussion started, or try using the discussion questions offered at the end of this chapter. Focus on having a thoughtful (and respectful) conversation rather than just going through a list of questions.
4. **Conclude your meeting – 5-10 minutes**
Stick to your schedule and conclude the meeting on time. If you plan to meet again be sure to assign the next book and remind people when the next meeting will be.

Follow-Up:

To keep everyone, especially new people, coming back, use a **sign-up sheet**. Download a free sign-up sheet from the Straight for Equality website. You can use this sign-up sheet to remind people of what book to read next, too!

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What should we read?

Here is the list of just a few recommended books for your book club. **Many of these works include mature content that is not suitable for children** - Make this clear in your advertising. Get comfortable with the content before you suggest a book – go online to sites like Wikipedia.org, Amazon.com, Lambda Literary, or just Google the book to get information. These are just a few suggestions, but there are literally hundreds of other books that would be great for this program.

1. **Any of the memoirs by David Sedaris**
A gay writer who reflects on his life, with his sexual orientation often providing the backdrop for many of his stories. Very funny!
2. ***Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistlestop Café* by Fannie Flagg**
Two women grow up in the South and develop a very close bond. A discussion about the nature of this relationship and how it is portrayed could give way to some interesting conversations.
3. ***The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall**
Two women fall in love in the 1920s. Written by a lesbian, this novel was very daring for its time, and it's a cultural milestone in the GLBT community.
4. ***Rubyfruit Jungle* by Rita Mae Brown**
An African American woman who has relationships with women and men tells her coming of age story.
5. ***Fingersmith* by Sarah Waters**
A very interesting and intricate crime drama set in Victorian England. There is a prominent love story between the two female protagonists, but it is just one element of this complex tale.
6. ***The Color Purple* by Alice Walker**
The award-winning story of an African American woman, her experiences in her community and family, and her same-gender loving relationship.
7. ***Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman**
Twelve long untitled poems that Whitman, who many presumed to be gay, added to throughout his life examines the link between the physical and spiritual world.
8. ***Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides**
A very engrossing book about one person's family and its secrets. The main character is intersex, so the book can lead to fascinating discussions about the fluidity of gender and social norms for gender roles.
9. ***Crisis* Edited by Mitchell Gold and Mindy Drucker**
Gold and Drucker highlight the stories of 40 diverse individuals and the struggles that they faced growing up gay in America. Some of their stories highlight the power straight allies can have in the form of parents, clergy, and friends.
10. ***Fall to Grace: A Revolution of God, Self & Society* by Jay Bakker**
Jay Bakker (the son of Jim and Tammy Faye) details his journey to rethinking the concept of grace, provides his theological underpinnings for the change, and then calls on Christians to take the same journey and apply a new way of thinking to responding to the GLBT community.

Discussion Questions:

To get the discussion going for your book club, consider asking some of these questions:

1. Which character (if any) did you identify most with? Why?
2. How did you think the gay characters were treated or portrayed? Why?
3. Did this book make you think differently about some GLBT people and/or issues? Why or why not?
4. Did the GLBT character(s) and/or themes receive any support from an ally? How was that support expressed?
5. Does knowing that there are GLBT characters and/or themes in these works affect how you understand them?
6. Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why or why not?



**Straight for Equality
Theater Night**

Going to see a play or musical is quite a treat, and you can use a night at the theater to get straight allies talking about GLBT people and issues. If you chose to attend a community or school theater, this event can also serve as a great opportunity to increase visibility for your chapter.

What:

Many plays, both modern and classic, have GLBT characters and/or themes. In addition, many playwrights are/were GLBT. If you see an ad for a local play or musical in the area, look it up and see if there is any GLBT connection with the play that could spark conversation. You'll find a list of a few plays to keep in mind at the end of this program chapter.

Ask participants to meet very briefly in the lobby before they take their seats so that you can introduce Straight for Equality and your chapter. After the play, go somewhere and have a discussion about the GLBT characters, themes, or playwright. Use the list of discussion questions at the end of the chapter to get you started.

Note. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the content of the show you plan on attending and make sure that your group is comfortable and prepared for what they're going to view.

Where and When:

Many towns have at least one playhouse small or independent theater that you could check out. Colleges and high-school theater groups often have performances in the spring and fall. Going to a play at a "non-professional" theater has the added bonus of letting you be more visible and engaged in your community.

After the play, pick a place to go for a discussion. Consider asking the theater if there is a space on-site where a small group can meet. If not a nearby coffee shop, restaurant, or someone's home are also appropriate.

Don't Forget!:
This event does involve some expense to cover ticket prices. You can make it more accessible by finding out if the theater has discounted group rates to help lower costs.

Who:



This can be a broad-based event that engages new people, so get out there and advertise to potential straight allies in the community. Think about who you would like to attend this event to determine where it will be best to advertise. You may consider advertising at the theater where the play will be performed. If you are attending a play at a local college or

high school contact the English and Theater departments to see if they will help you spread the word. Coffee shops, art studios or museums, and community centers are also great places to advertise.

Event Schedule:

1. **Begin advertising** – Six weeks before Theater Night
2. **Introduce PFLAG, Straight for Equality and your local chapter** – Five minutes. If possible, do this at the assigned meeting place before you enter the theater. Tell everyone a little bit about PFLAG, what Straight for Equality is, and where and when your chapter meets. Then, invite everyone to stay after the show for discussion.
3. Enjoy the show!
4. **Discussion** – 30-60 minutes
Have one person be the discussion moderator. There are a few questions at the end of this chapter that you can use to help get the discussion started. You don't have to ask every question on the list. Simply focus on having a thoughtful (and respectful) conversation, using the questions as a way to get people talking.
5. **Conclude the meeting** – 5 -10 minutes
Stick to your schedule and conclude the meeting on time. Ask participants if they would be interested in attending similar events in the future and be sure to thank them for coming.

Follow-Up:

To keep everyone, especially new people, coming back, use a **sign-up sheet**. See the sample sign-up sheet online. If this program is successful, you may want to try it again with the group for another play. If you've received good feedback, be sure to let people know about other Straight-for Equality-related events you're doing!

Connect with us online!

Facebook: www.facebook.com/S4Equality | **Twitter:** @S4Equality

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What should we go to see?

Here is the list of recommended plays for your Theater Night. **Many of these works include mature content that is not suitable for children.** Make this clear in your advertising. Also, before choosing any of these plays, do a little homework to make sure that you're comfortable with the material. IMDB.com and Wikipedia.org are two great resources for getting more background information on any of these pieces and helping prepare you to lead the discussion. These are just a few suggestions, but there are literally hundreds of other plays that would be great for this program.

1. ***Six Degrees of Separation***

This play shows how we are all connected, no matter what our orientation, gender, race, etc. The main character is a con man who seeks shelter in a middle class suburb.

2. ***Spring Awakening***

A musical about a group of students growing up in Germany in the late 19th century; they're just discovering love and sexuality.

3. ***Rent***

The famous musical that touches on GLBT issues and issues surrounding living with HIV/AIDS, and the basis for the film.

4. ***Avenue Q***

A humorous musical about a group of friends trying to make a life for themselves in New York. The characters are puppets (really).

5. ***Cat on a Hot Tin Roof***

A play by Tennessee Williams (himself a gay man) about the many tensions within a Southern family. One source of tension is husband Brick's feelings for his friend Skipper (it's presumed by many that Brick was in love with Skipper).

6. ***Twelfth Night***

One of Shakespeare's comedies: the main character, Viola, dresses as a man which causes much confusion.

7. ***The Laramie Project***

A great play based on actual interviews of the citizens of Laramie, Wyoming following the murder of Matthew Shepherd.

8. ***Bent***

This groundbreaking play revolves around the persecution of gay men in Nazi-controlled Europe during World War II. At the time of its original premier in 1979 there was little known this topic and the play helped to stimulate academic research.

9. ***Fifth of July***

Set amongst the backdrop of disillusionment with the Vietnam War this play follows the Talley family's ups and downs after injured veteran Kenneth Talley, Jr. returns to his childhood with his boyfriend Jed.

10. ***Boys in the Band***

Set in the Upper East Side of Manhattan this play is set at Harold's birthday celebration and deals with a wide variety of topics such as aging, promiscuity, addiction, and stereotypes.

Discussion Questions:

To get the discussion going after Theater night, consider asking some of these questions.

1. Which character did you identify most with – if any? Why?
2. How did you think the GLBT character(s) were treated? Why?
3. Did this play make you think differently about some gay people and/or issues? Why or why not?
4. Did the GLBT character(s) and/or themes receive any support from an ally? How was that support expressed?
5. Does knowing that there are GLBT characters and/or themes in these works affect how you understand them?



The Straight for Equality House Party

A house party is a great way to introduce Straight for Equality to your chapter and the wider community. This casual event can make your chapter more visible to your networks while letting people know about this great program.

What:

A party to introduce Straight for Equality. This event is all about introducing the Straight for Equality program, getting people familiar with Straight for Equality publications, and letting people get to know and interact with each other.

Since this will be held at someone's home, be conscious of who you invite. It may not be appropriate to advertise this to the whole community, so think creatively about your invite list. You can use this as a chance to reach out to your personal networks. It may also be a good chance to reconnect with community organizations that your chapter has worked with in the past. And don't forget your friends and neighbors. Often these are people that know you do *something* with PFLAG, but don't know what it is. Here's your chance to tell them a bit about your work, and, more importantly about a project that offers something for them, too.

Where and When:

It's really nice to have this event in someone's house because it's less formal and allows people to relax and talk to each other in a laid-back atmosphere. For this particular event it's important to provide food: you can have anything from snacks to a buffet dinner or a potluck. The important thing is to get people talking to each other, and food is a great icebreaker.

Don't Forget!:

Make Straight for Equality materials available on tables for people to take home with them. Consider the Straight for Equality postcard or something you can print at home as a cost-saving option.



Who:

It's important to invite a wide variety of people to this event. Straight for Equality is for everyone, so everyone – chapter members, your networks, and community members alike – should be invited. Ask your friends, family, and neighbors to attend.

If you've done other Straight for Equality programs and made some new connections, this could be a great way to bring them back for another opportunity to learn more and become more engaged with the work that you're doing.

Event Schedule:

1. **Send invitations – at least six weeks prior to the event.** Since you are going to invite people who you are familiar with, a follow-up note or e-mail reminding them about the event a week out is a good way to keep the program on their schedules.
2. **Give everyone some time to arrive – 20 minutes.** Allow people to mingle and get something to eat.
3. **Have the designated person (or people) get up and speak about Straight for Equality – 10-20 minutes.** Designate one person to talk about Straight for Equality during the party. Have them give a five minute speech explaining what Straight for Equality is and why it's important. You may want to also feature two or three speakers who will each tell a brief (think three-minute) personal story with a different perspective and "ask" for the attendees to support our efforts. For example, one ask might be to participate in an upcoming educational event you are doing. Another might be to take a copy of the Straight for Equality in Healthcare guide and give it to their healthcare provider. Always connect your stories with action.
4. **Continue mingling – as long as you want!** Be sure that chapter members are there to answer any questions about PFLAG and Straight for Equality.
5. **Conclude the party by asking if there are any questions and be sure to thank your guests for coming.** Remind people to take materials with them and sign the sign-up sheet. Also remind them to go online to www.straightforequality.org/pledge to sign the Straight for Equality pledge as well as "like" Straight for Equality on Facebook.

Follow-Up:

Be sure to keep your new friends informed about the programs and activities! If they want to do more with Straight for Equality, be sure to invite them to your next event. If they want to get involved with PFLAG, be sure that they know when and where your next meeting will be.

Connect with us online!

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